

A History of Transportation in Lincoln, Nebraska

December 16, 2003



Transportation is Evolutionary and Dynamic



History of Transportation

- Modes of transportation evolutionary and dynamic
- Four dominant eras of transportation in Lincoln's history:
 - Horse and Buggy
 - Streetcar
 - Bus
 - Automobile
- Bicycling and walking used throughout eras in evolutionary pattern as well

Establishment of a Capitol

- 1859
 - Lancaster County is organized and platted with a grid pattern of streets
 - County law established making county roads 4 rods wide, or 66 feet
- 1867
 - Nebraska becomes a state and Lincoln is formed as its capitol
 - Street right-of-way widths set at 100 feet with extra 20 feet added to "special" streets such as O Street
- 1869
 - University of Nebraska founded

Original Plat of Lincoln - 1867



Railroads Spur Growth

- 1870
 - Population of Lincoln is 2,500
 - 1870 - Burlington and Missouri River Railroad reaches Lincoln
 - 1877 - Union Pacific Railroad reaches Lincoln
- 1880
 - Population of Lincoln is 13,000
 - 1886 - Missouri Pacific and Chicago & Northwestern Railroads arrive
- 1890
 - Population of Lincoln is 55,000

Burlington Station – 7th and P Street, 1880



Developments in Local Transportation



- Prior to introduction of the streetcar, the horse and buggy is the dominant form of travel
- During 1880s, extreme population growth expands city limits in all directions except northwest
- League of American Wheelmen formed in 1880 and lobbies for better roads. Begins The Good Roads Movement. Bicycling a recreational hobby.
- In 1888, cedar block used for first time in the business district as an upgrade from dirt roads

View North on 11th Street to University Hall, 1889



Palace Livery Stables



First Bicycles - The High Wheel and the Yale Pneumatic

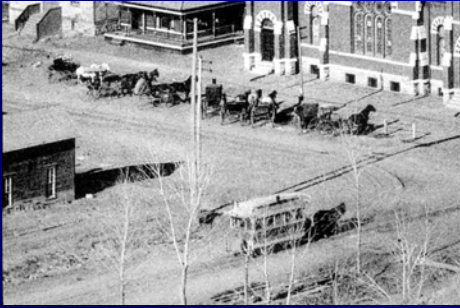


Streetcar Era 1883-1925



- 1883
 - Lincoln Street Railway Company begins first horse-drawn streetcar line between Burlington Depot and 13th and O Street. Capital City Street Railway also begins operations.
- 1887
 - Lincoln Belt Line, South Lincoln Street Railway Company, and Rapid Transit open
- Streetcar lines begin to link the city to surrounding areas with Downtown as the hub.

Horse Drawn Streetcar, c. 1889



Streetcar Era 1883-1925



- 1890
 - Five streetcar companies operating in Lincoln with 54 cars, 92 employees, and 31.6 miles of track, and 1,744,784 passengers annually
- 1891
 - Electric streetcars start operating and horse-pulled cars begin to be phased out
- 1890's
 - Several colleges founded on outskirts of Lincoln, with separate towns forming at University Place, Bethany Heights, and College View. Streetcar lines link these towns to Lincoln.

Electric Streetcars, c. 1900

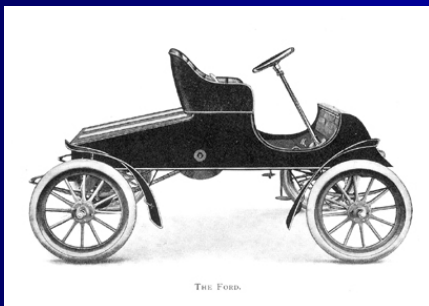


Streetcar Era 1883-1925



- 1895
 - Four experimental automobiles in existence
- 1902
 - The first automobile reportedly rolls down the streets of Lincoln. The American Automobile Association (AAA) is formed. 17 million horses and 23,000 cars in United States. Automobiles only affordable to the rich.
- 1905
 - Not a single mile of paved roadway exists in the United States even though there are over 2 million miles of road nationwide.

Ford Model A, 1903



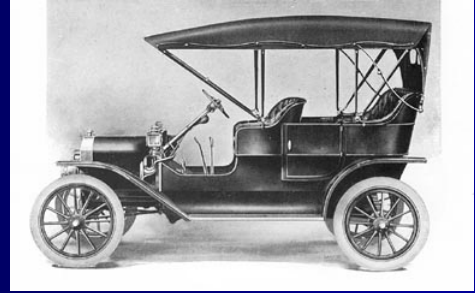
Old City Hall, 9th and O Street, c. 1900



Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1906
 - The Lyman horse car on the Belmont Line ceases operation as the last horse-pulled streetcar
- 1907
 - Streetcar line on N Street east to 29th to S Street to Wyuka completed.
 - Other lines completed were west on Holdrege to the Fairgrounds, east on Vine to 33rd, south on 12th to South Street, and east to 19th.
- 1908
 - Line to College View is completed

Ford Model T, 1909



Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1910
 - Over 11,000 automobiles registered in Nebraska. The State begins to respond to demand for better roads for automobiles.
- 1911
 - State Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage formed. Its secretary is required to be a civil engineer and is called the State Engineer.
- 1912
 - Highland line to College View down Sheridan Boulevard is opened

Dedication of Lincoln Statue in Capital Building, 1912



Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- Summary of Nebraska's automobile laws in the 1913 Official Road Book of the Nebraska State Automobile Association:
 - "Register with the Secretary of State in Lincoln; fee \$2.00 per year. No provision is made for individual operating licenses. Owner must provide his own tags. Non-residents are exempt if they have their own state tags. Speed limits: 10 mph in business sections, 15 mph in residence districts, 20 mph elsewhere. Lights: one or more white lights in front and a red light in the rear."

Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1914
 - Little to no roadway markings on Nebraska roads
 - The Omaha-Lincoln-Denver Highway (U.S. 6 and 34 today) is considered one of only three major highways in the state in 1914 according to State Engineer Donald Price
 - Production of motor vehicles in the United States exceeds the output of wagons and carriages for the first time

O.L.D. Roadway Marker On O Street



Unpaved Roadway Issues



Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1916
 - Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 is passed and begins the process of federal-state cooperation for roadway development and improvement
- 1918
 - First federal aid road project in Nebraska, FAP No. 1, begins on the road between Lincoln and Emerald (West O Street)
- 1920
 - Vehicle registration in Nebraska reaches 223,000

Terminal Building, Headquarters of Lincoln Traction Company, 1916



Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1920s
 - A "golden age" for road building with Roaring 20s economy, demand for better roads, and federal funding program. Motor vehicles, including buses, begin rise to prominence.
- 1921
 - Eleven automobile highways radiating out of Lincoln. Car dealers are now commonplace.
- 1922
 - The Gunny's Complex is built at 13th and Q Street in Downtown Lincoln. Built as a showplace and home for Nebraska Buick Automobile Company.

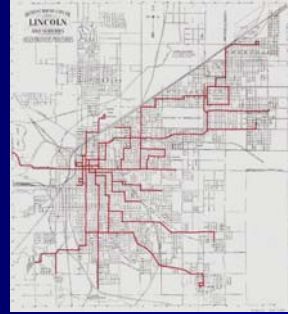
Main Highways through Lincoln, 1921



Gunny's Complex



Extent of Streetcar Lines in 1924

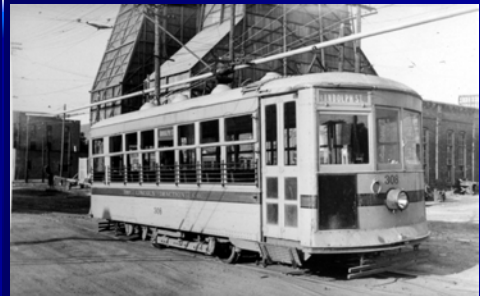


Bus Era 1926-1945



- 1926-1930
 - Lincoln annexes surrounding college towns of University Place, Bethany, and College View, and industrial Havelock. Buses begin to replace streetcars throughout the city.
- 1926
 - Lincoln Traction Company starts its first bus routes between Downtown and University Place
- 1927
 - The Capital Beach Line substitutes buses for streetcars. Three additional bus lines started by Lincoln Traction Company.

Randolph Street Streetcar, c. 1930



New Fleet of Buses, c. 1930



Bus Era 1926-1945

- 1928
 - Alfred DuTeau opens his first Chevrolet dealership in Lincoln
- 1929
 - There are 419,000 motor vehicles registered in NE
- 1930
 - Driver education classes are first offered in high schools
- 1930s
 - Great Depression hits and road building is slowed dramatically

DuTeau Car Dealership



Towne Park/Union Bus Terminal, 1936



Bus Era 1926-1945

- 1941
 - Road building comes to a standstill due to rationing of supplies and funding for the war effort
- The railroads carry 98% of military personnel in groups and 90% of military freight handled by inland transportation during the war. Highlights need for interstate program.

Bus Era 1926-1945

- 1942
 - National City Lines acquires Lincoln Traction
- 1945
 - The last street car lines, Sheridan Boulevard line to College View, and the Randolph Street line, are shut down. Ironically, the peak annual patronage of buses and streetcars is reached this year at 11,674,000 passengers.

Bus Use Post World War II, c. 1950



Automobile Era 1945-Present



- 1949
 - Fare increase for the third consecutive year on Lincoln City Lines
- 1950s
 - Plans for construction of Interstate 80 through Nebraska begin
- 1952
 - City of Lincoln agrees to grant Lincoln City Lines an abatement from the franchise tax
 - First Comprehensive Plan adopted. New Zoning Ordinance requires sidewalks